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Introduction

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INTRODUCTION

The Hispanic community in the United States, as Suárez-Orozco and Pérez (2002, p. 4) state, is at once comprised of the oldest Americans and the newest immigrants. It is a highly complex and diverse group, characterized by differences in country of origin, economic class, languages and dialects, religion, formal educational attainment, work history, documentation status in the United States, and political orientation, among other things, both at the intra- (e.g., Mexican American) and at the inter-Hispanic (e.g., Cuban, Colombian, Guatemalan, etc.) group levels. Three of the articles in this volume (DeVillar & Jiang, Faltis, and Guajardo) address a segment of this broad range of diverse elements, still complex, although relatively uniform in socioeconomic class (low income to poor), formal educational attainment at the parental level (generally less than high school), and dominant language (Spanish). Zebich-Knos (this volume) and Houston (this volume) address parallel intergroup relations vis-à-vis the United States where race is a factor: in the case of Zebich-Knos, opportunities for equitable immigration policies regarding Haitian refugees (contrasted with Cuban refugee policies); and, in the case of Houston, barriers and opportunities regarding intergroup community building in the form of coalitions between African Americans and Hispanics to empower each and both.

The present collection of articles is framed within an Aristotelian notion of equity—that is, each addresses the threaded issue of access, participation, and benefit (DeVillar, 1986, 1994, 1999; DeVillar & Faltis, 1991, 1994) with that of a “correction of law where it is defective” (Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, Book V, Section 10, quoted in DeVillar, 1999, p. 322). In this way, researchers, as well as decision makers, may help society to avoid and transcend errors, such as the one that occurred following the U.S. Supreme Court’s partially Aristotelian approach to *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954). This classic, long-term error involved the correction of a legal injustice, but not of the practice associated with it—the mandate was put in place without the concomitant societal will or power to implement the correction until a 13-year national civil rights’ struggle had taken place (1954–1968). Hence, the authors align themselves as well to the second critical element of Aristotle’s notion of equity: that “liberty and equality ... will be best attained when

all persons alike share in the government to the utmost" (Aristotle, *Politics*, Part IV), or as Christman (2003) rephrased it, "Justice amounts to that set of principles that are established in practice and rendered legitimate by the actual support of the affected citizens (and their representatives) in a process of collective discourse and deliberation" (original emphasis). The issue of equity is addressed through the three corollary themes of *immigration*, *education*, and *empowerment*. Each corollary theme, to differing degrees, has converged over the past 15 years upon the landscape of the U.S. Southeast to describe, shape, and inform its developing socio-culturo-politico-economic context. The degree of relationship of any one corollary theme to its counterparts varies among the contributing authors.

In addition, and more specifically, the collection of articles also adheres to three principles espoused by Suárez-Orozco and Pérez (2002, pp. 2-3) regarding Latino (Hispanic)¹ studies: Namely, the scholarship presented in this volume (a) relates to the "Latino population of the United States and its transnational links to the Caribbean and Latin American worlds ... [and covers] a broad range of social science and humanistic scholarship"; (b) is interdisciplinary; and (c) is comparative. In "Immigrant Students in U.S. Schools: Building a Pro-Immigrant, English Plus Education Counterscript," Christian Faltis addresses educational policies, programs, and practices for immigrant students, particularly from Spanish-speaking countries, from a general U.S. context. This highly informative, research-based article has definite policy and practice implications for schooling in Georgia and the Southeastern United States. Francisco Guajardo, in "Teacher, Researcher, and Agent for Community Change: A South Texas High School Experience," offers an experience-based multidimensional model that builds a vibrant sense of identity and community, forms meaningful intergenerational relationships between students and elders, engages high school and postsecondary students in ethnographic research, enhances Hispanic students' academic achievement, and fosters successful completion of the postsecondary cycle. Michele Zebich-Knos, in "Cubans, ¡Sí!; Haitians, ¡No!: U.S. Immigration Policy, Cultural Politics, and Immigrant Eligibility," compares and contrasts U.S. immigration policy and practice toward Cubans and Haitians within the framework of international law and U.S. concepts of due process of law. The notions of race, socioeconomic status, and health are embedded in the text as unofficial factors that influence definitions of eligible legal status and related actions, in contrast to official factors that include political asylum from Communist or war-torn, pro-Communist countries (e.g., Cuba, various Central American countries during the 1980s and 1990s). Ramona Houston, in "The Value of African American and Latino Coalitions to the American South," presents a research-informed essay that addresses the potential of African American-Latino coalitions in the Southeast, integrates a general backdrop of history, need, and benefit, and analyzes the persistent problem of intergroup ("Black-Brown") racialization, competition, and conflict. In

"Education and Hispanics in Hypergrowth Areas: The Georgia Question in American Schooling," Robert DeVillar and Binbin Jiang depict and analyze the educational context of Georgia, while also including national and regional data with respect to white, African American, Asian American and Hispanic American groups, both in traditional educational performance contexts and in current ones. They articulate the persistent problem in generally educating the Georgian populace, regardless of race or ethnicity, analyze and interpret some barrier-inducing policies and practices, and offer recommendations to improve the general and specific academic performance of students, including Hispanic-origin students.

The five contributions in this special issue of the *Journal of Global Initiatives*, together with Todd Harper's book review of Joel Spring's *Pedagogies of Globalization: The Rise of the Educational Security State*, expand our knowledge base, pose new questions, and generate viable alternatives regarding the complex factors that inform issues and practices of immigration, identity, education, and empowerment affecting the general Hispanic community, as well as several of the particular communities that comprise it. The authors articulate a common need to accurately visualize the demographic circumstances of the South, including the Southeast and Southwest, and to respond in ways that are consistent with the equity-charged democratic principles of the United States to ensure intergroup inclusion and collaboration, as well as positively and dramatically influence social, cultural, and educational outcomes.

—Robert A. DeVillar
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NOTES

1. These terms are interchangeable as there is not a set of criteria agreed upon by scholars who specialize in this field of study that would generate objectively distinct elements by which definitions for each term might legitimately be composed. Much like the term *race* and other labels that attempt to comprehensively define particular human groups and distinguish them from one another, *Latino* and *Hispanic* are essentially social constructs that are defined operationally and made distinct rather than themselves identifying an inherent difference. There are adherents who lay claim to the sole use of a particular term and who offer perceived distinctions that upon scholarly scrutiny fail to be sustained. Thus, the use of one term to the exclusion of the other is best classified as a matter of convenience or preference rather than as a substantive matter enabling scholars and the lay public to accurately distinguish between these two supposed groups. Nevertheless, it must be acknowledged that the exclusive use of one or the other term can reflect a political, philosophical, or other kind of perspective shared by a number of people and can generate and maintain perceived, if not actual, distinctions. See, for example, DeSipio and De la Garza (2002), Portes (2004), Tienda (2006), Torres-Saillant (2002), and Zentella (2002), regarding the interchangeability of the terms.

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